

# Register of Historic Kansas Places

## Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating individual properties and districts. The format is similar to the National Register of Historic Places form. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets. Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name Matrot Castle and Vineyard

Other name/site number 177-0000-0003

### 2. Location

Street & number 6424 SW Huntoon ☐ not for publication

City or town Topeka ☐ vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Shawnee Code 177 Zip code 66006

### 3.,4. Certification

I hereby certify that this property is listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

Patricia J. Fisher DSHPO  
Signature of certifying official/Title

8/28/06  
Date

### 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>		total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter Categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/processing and storage + winery.

DOMESTIC/single dwelling = castle

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business = office  
WORKS IN PROGRESS building

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/  
Renaissance/French Renaissance

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: brick  
Walls: brick

Roof: Asphalt, metal

Other:

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the State Register)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

### Period of Significance

1883-1901

### Significant Dates

1883

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

Seraphim P. Matrot, architect and builder

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)  
has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # \_\_\_\_\_

#### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.51 acre

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	5	2	6	0	1	2	3	4	3	2	5	0	9	1
Zone	Easting				Northing										
2															

3															
Zone	Easting				Northing										
4															

☒ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Tom Swain

Organization \_\_\_\_\_ Date April 2006

Street & number 2032 North 600 Road Telephone 785 883-2105

City or town Baldwin City State KS Zip code 66006

## Property Owner

Name Jerry Wittmer, International Centers Worldwide, Inc,

Street & number 6424 SW Huntoon Telephone 785 272-8989

City or town Topeka State KS Zip code 66615

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### Matrot Castle

Shawnee County, Kansas

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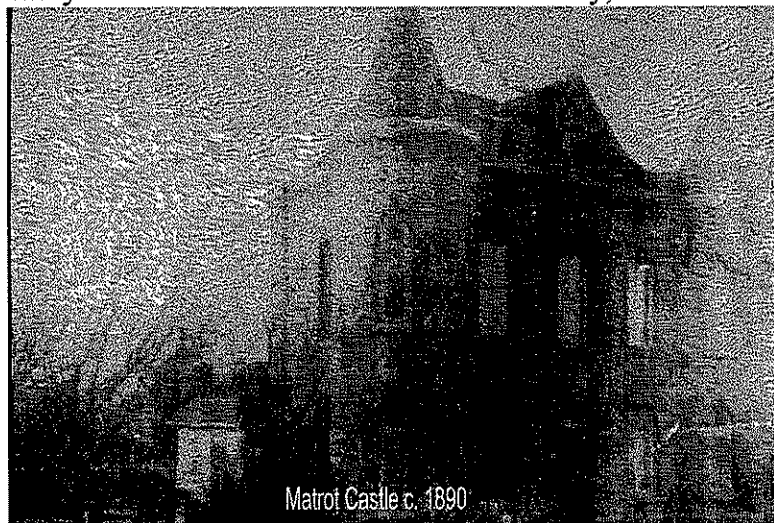
#### Architectural Description

##### Overview

The Matrot Castle was built in Mission Township, Shawnee County near Topeka, KS on 40 acres of wooded land. Over the years as the property changed hands, the castle site was reduced to an acre with an address of 6424 SW Huntoon, Topeka, KS 66615. The castle is nominated for its architecture and its historical significance. It is difficult to place the castle in a category. Seraphin Matrot did not use the gabled facades or fancy brick work of earlier styled Norman type castles. The earlier castles had found that circular towers were stronger and easier to defend. The French renaissance paid more attention to symmetry than earlier styles and made extensive use of the hemispherical dome. Matrot used the steeply pitched conical roofs on the towers, elaborate dormers, tall narrow diamond paned windows which characterize the Chateausque architecture style that was popular in the United States from 1880-1910.

Topeka has had other castles in the past; one at 17<sup>th</sup> and Arnold, one in Potwin and one on Gage Blvd. None of these survive making the Matrot Castle unique to Shawnee County. This along with its history of being built by a political refuge makes it a rare property in Kansas.

The castle has maintained a high degree of integrity in design and in the use of material. Seraphin Matrot originally designed the castle as a dwelling place for his family. They would not move to the United States unless he could guarantee them similar housing to what they enjoyed in France (local history). The design of the Norman type castle also included an extensive wine cellar. Oral history reports that Seraphim had also been a wine merchant while in Paris. A Matrot family still maintains vineyards and wineries in Neursault in Volney, France.



##### Exterior

The original castle is 28ft wide (north to south) and 14ft wide (east to west) with two towers (8ft 6in in diameter) anchoring the northeast and southeast corners. It has a large cellar and two main floors with a

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third floor type attic. In the 1940s, an addition was added to the west side of the castle that runs 25ft west from the exterior wall and inset 3ft 2in from the south wall. This was a two-story addition utilizing what appears to be identical brick to the original structure. It measures 25ft east to west and 24ft 6in north to south. The only breach in the original castle wall was for a door 2ft 10in by 6ft at the south end of the west wall.

The first floor wall has an exterior length north/south of 28ft and a width east/west of 14ft. The windows on the turrets are arched and face northwest, northeast, and southeast in the north turret and northeast, southeast, and southwest in the south turret allowing anyone in the castle an almost 360 degree view of the area surrounding the castle. These turret windows are 2 ft 3in in from the castle wall on each end and have a third window 4ft 7in between the two corner windows. They are 2ft wide and 4ft 7in tall ending in a point. The sills were originally walnut but have been replaced with a concrete sill measuring 23in wide and 3in thick. The windows are 3ft above ground level in the towers and 1ft above a circular ridge of brick that sets a half of a brick out from the tower. Similar turret windows are on the second floor with the same spacing from the walls of the castle and the sills are 10 ft from the ground.

The castle walls on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor have two windows on the south and north that are 6ft 4in from the west wall. They are 3ft 3in wide and 6ft tall with a slight brick over each window. The walnut sills have been replaced with concrete – 3ft 8in by 3in thick. A massive door is centered beginning 3ft 4in from the windows.. The door opening measures 9ft tall with a 1ft 7in arch above the door opening. The door is 3ft 3in wide and over 8in thick. The original door is being refinished with its hidden locking mechanism. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> story, there are three windows spaced as the door and two windows are on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. The roofs of the turrets are 20 ft from the ground and are topped by ornate brickwork. The roofs were originally shingle but were replaced in the 1940s with copper and more recently the flashings have also been redone in copper. The attic floor has 4 dormers facing north, south, east, and west that allow viewing of the immediate area in all directions. It peaks at 7ft 6in about 3ft short of the tower height.

The main door had a small courtyard with flower boxes from the 1886 photos but this has been replaced with a semi-circular brick patio extending 10ft 10in from the door surrounded by a 2ft 4in wall with a 4ft 2in opening flanked by two 2ft 2in by 1ft 2in square posts.

In addition, recent additions to the site have included the planting of grape arbors around the castle shielding it from Huntoon on the south. Wine presses, and storage vats are tastefully arranged outside the north wall of the castle. The stairway and sidewalk from the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the addition has an arched cover from the building to the drive.

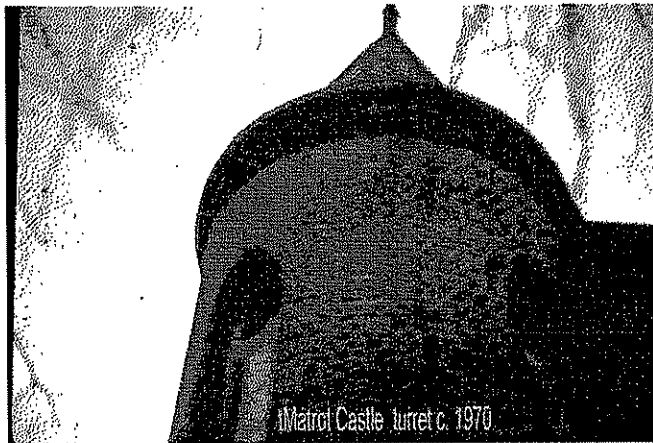
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### Matrot Castle

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#### Interior

The wine cellar has an interior length of 25ft 8in by 13ft 6in. The entrance is on the north with a 3ft 6in door opening and steps that have since been replaced with concrete. There is a brick overhang beginning 5ft up the wall, 7ft wide and 5ft long covering part of the stairs. It is 8ft from the overhead to the top of the stairs. The arched ceiling runs north and south and begins 5ft from the floor and peaks at 8ft 3in tall. There are arched windows/ventilation openings on the east wall 3ft opening in the arch of the east wall 4ft from the turret openings. The brick vaulted shafts 2ft 2in by 3ft 2in provided ventilation to the cellar with an outside opening measuring 25in by 4in. There is a similar ventilation port on the south wall. These have had Plexiglas covers installed recently to prevent rain water from entering the cellar. Earlier photographs show what appears to be gas lighting, which has been replaced with electricity. The floor of the cellar is brick covered with poured concrete. On the east wall 8ft from the north wall, there is a 3ft 6in opening for the tunnel that ran to a nearby ravine. The tunnel was filled in during the 1940s and the opening is now an access to the basement of the addition.

The wine cellar opens to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor addition through the 3ft wide opening (and steps leading up) of the old tunnel 8ft from the north wall of the cellar. The addition is 22ft 6in north to south and 24ft east to west. It has a staircase on the west wall leading to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the addition. The furnace is on the south wall.

The floor construction of the other floors is 2x 8in joists covered with hardwood flooring measuring 10 inches total.

The 1<sup>st</sup> floor is flanked north and south by the towers measuring 6ft 6in interior measurement. In the south tower floor, the hole that allowed Matrot to bring wine to guests from the cellar is being repaired. For the past 50 years this turret has held a suit of armor. The main room measures 13ft 1in east to west and 26ft 7in north to south with a 7ft in diameter narrow circular staircase to the second floor located 10ft 7in from the south wall. The interior size of the windows is 3ft and 6ft 8in. They are 2ft 5in off the

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floor. The turrets are entered by way of an arched doorway 8ft 2in (the room ceiling is 9ft). The turret windows are 2ft 2in from the floor and are 2ft wide by 4ft 8in tall. The furniture – table, chairs and desk are in keeping with the French theme of the castle restoration. The windows are leaded and protected by Plexiglas. The draperies and wall hanging are consistent with 19<sup>th</sup> century or earlier French décor. This floor and the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor are being used as office and meeting space for International Center Worldwide, Inc.

The previously mentioned small door enters the two-story addition on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. The room is 25<sup>th</sup> east to west and has been divided into a conference room of 15ft 6in north and another room 14ft 3in on the south side of the addition. A bathroom in on the west wall and a staircase leads down and outside in the northwest corner. There is a fireplace on the south wall that is sealed off from the outside. There are three windows equally spaced on the south wall (36in by 75ft 8in) and one such window centered on the north wall.

The second floor dimensions are the same except for about 6in smaller in width and length of the room as the castle walls also tilt slightly in as it becomes taller. Another window replaces the door opening on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. The towers measure 2in less in diameter (6ft 6in as opposed to 6ft 8in on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor)

The third floor dimensions of the original castle are about the same as below though about 6in smaller in width than the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor (11ft 10in x 24ft 2in). The entrances to the turrets are small crawl spaces and the ceiling follows the angles of the exposed rafters with a maximum height of 7ft 6in. Rehabilitation of this room currently continues.

**Matrot Castle**

Stairway  
UP

Wine Cellar +  
Basement

Storage  
UP

Additional  
Basement

Sepden  
to Old Tunnel  
opening

Arched Brick  
(Ceiling Ht 8'3")

Wine  
Cellar

Arched window  
well

Arched window  
well

Arched  
window well

Dimensions:  
 - Overall width: 24'  
 - Overall length: 20'6"  
 - Room widths: 10'-0", 7'-0", 12'-6", 25'-8"  
 - Stairway width: 3'-0"  
 - Arched brick section width: 3'-8"  
 - Arched window well radius: 6'-3"

(Not exactly to scale)

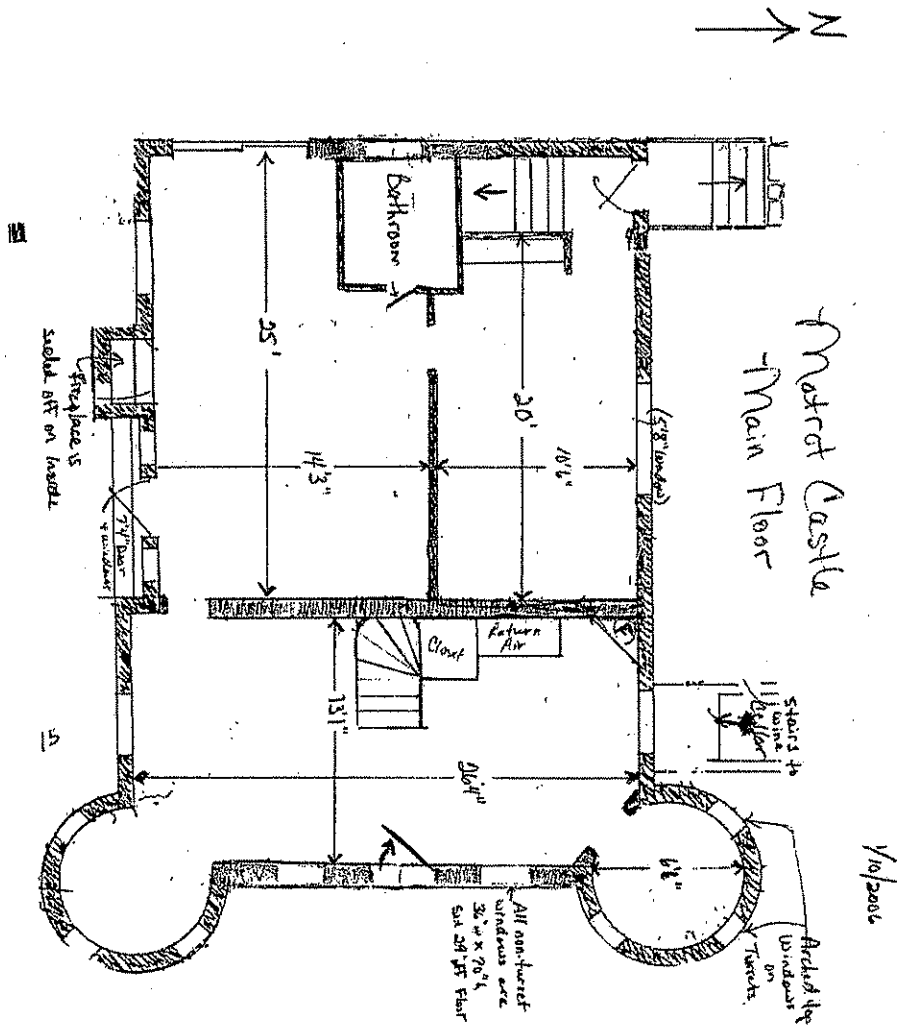


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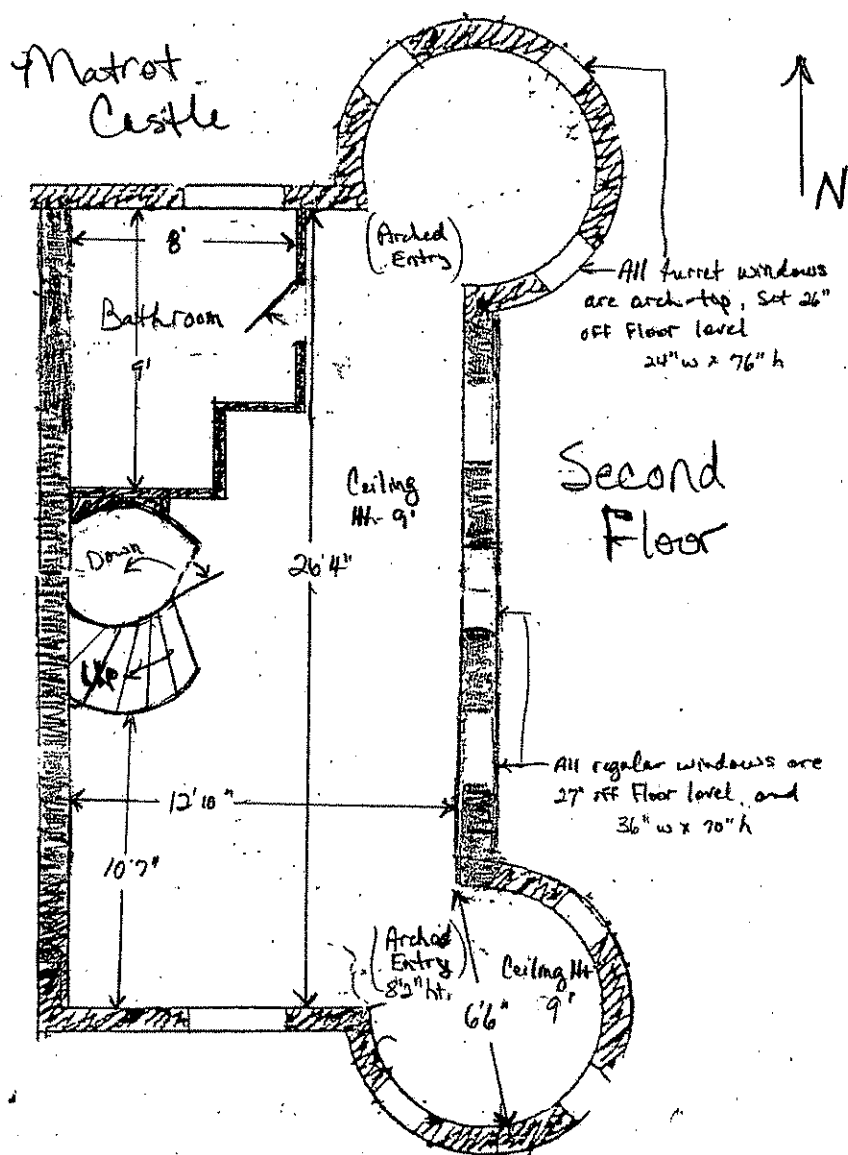


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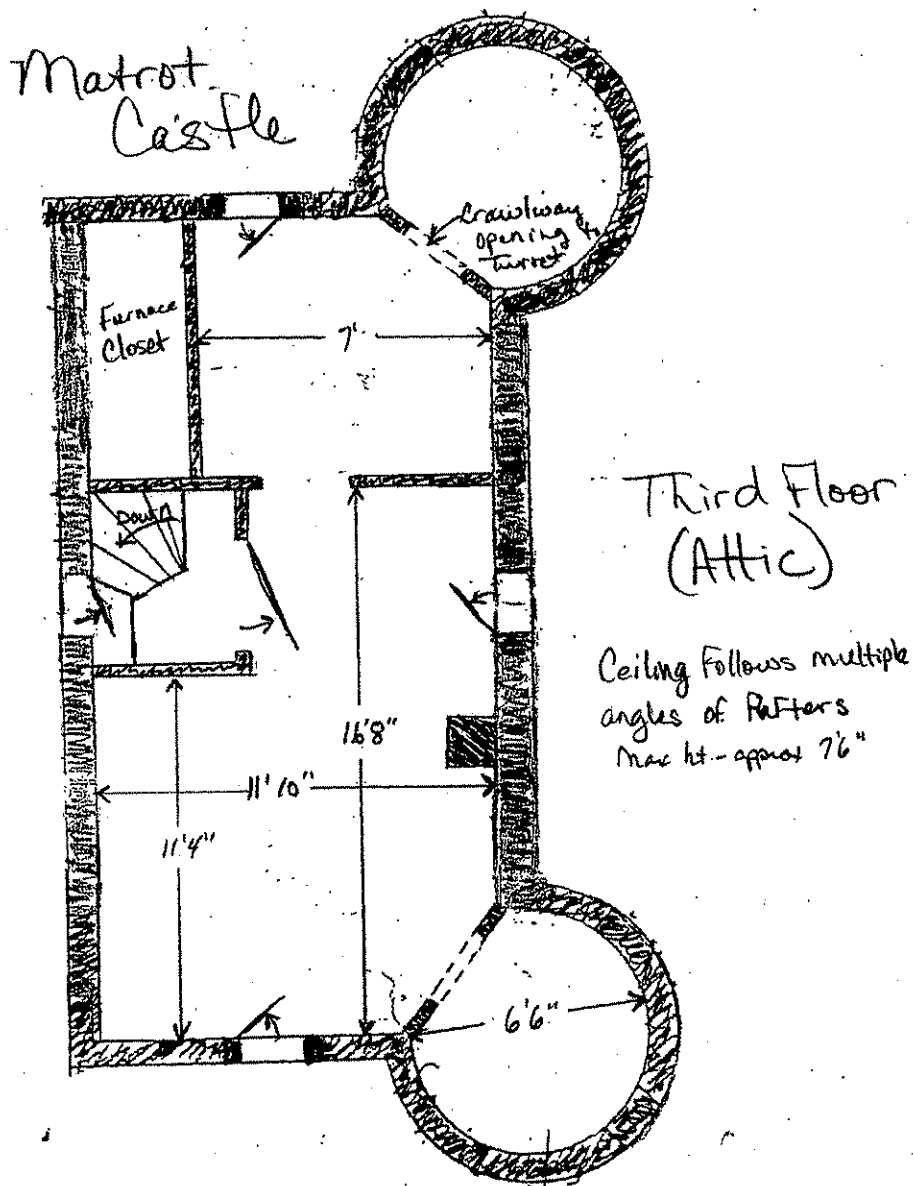


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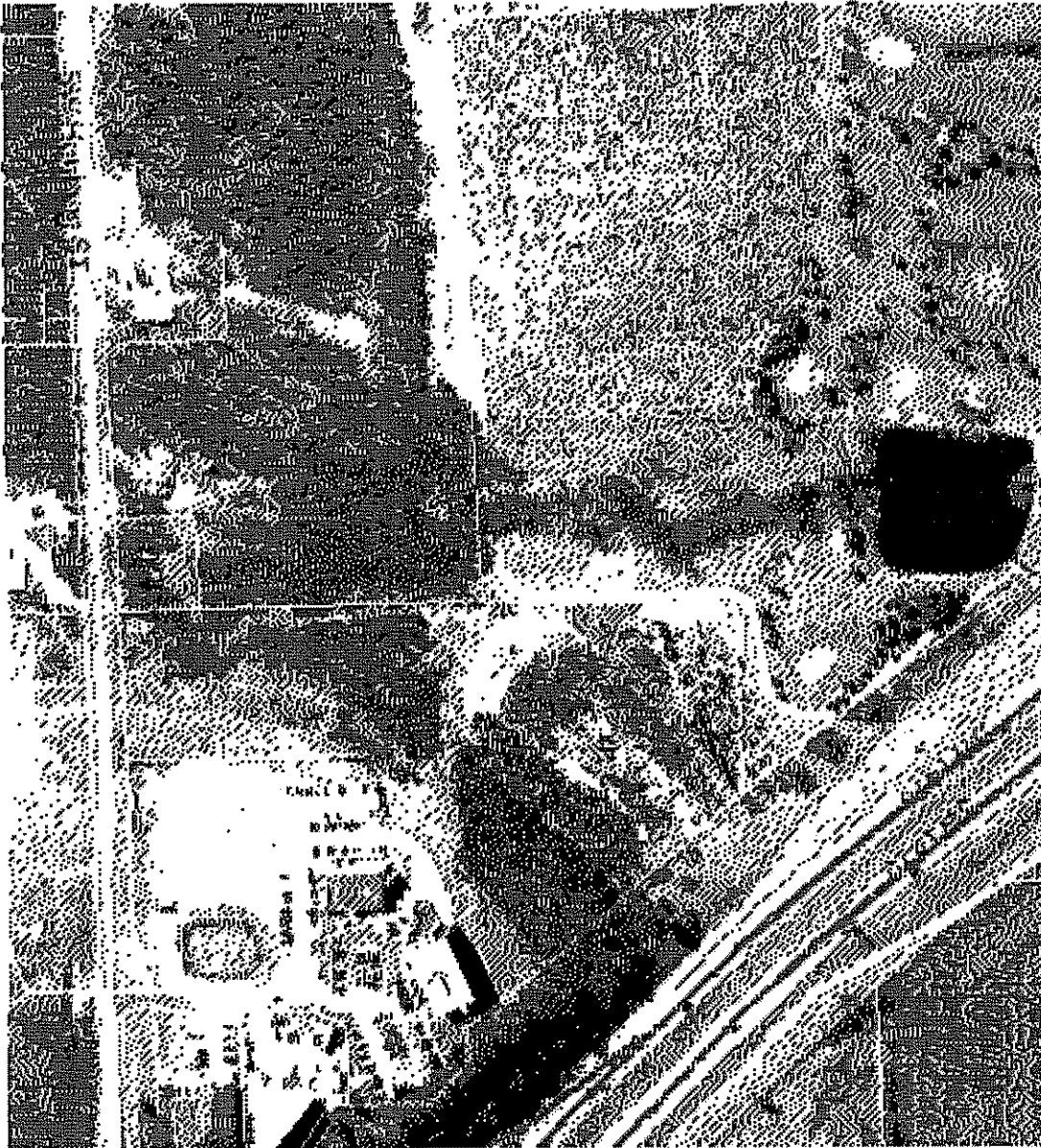
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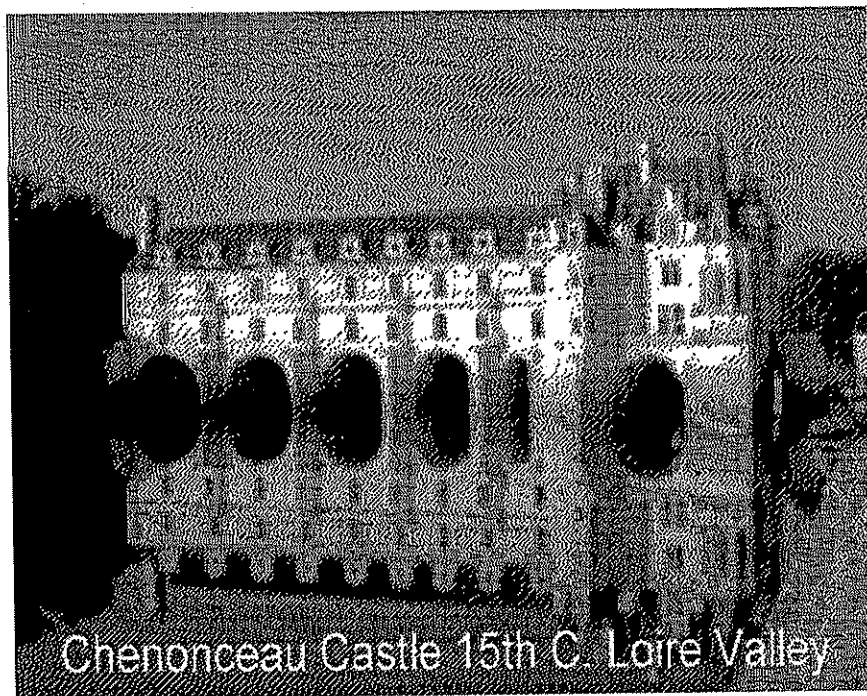
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#### Statement of Significance

The Matrot Castle and Vineyard is nominated under Criterion C for the architecture. The structure is unique as most castle homes built during the period between 1880 and 1910 that were classified as Chateausque architecture were loosely based on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century French chateaus castle combinations that were popular in the Loire Valley of France. American versions began on the east coast and were modified stone castles, complete with steeply pitched hipped roofs, elaborate dormers and gable parapets, towers, spires, and all manner of florid Gothic detailing, from gargoyles to griffins. Wealthy citizens usually constructed them as show homes. The style was fashionable into the first decade of the 1900s. The Matrot Castle is representative of the Chateausque style. While it is not as elaborate as the show houses mentioned above, according to oral history, a Frenchman with architectural experience built it.



#### Historical Significance

The United States has traditionally been a haven for persons fleeing oppression and persecution. Seraphim Matrot was a French refugee architect and contractor who had fled France on fear of his life after the Franco-Prussian War and sought asylum in the United States with his family. Documents establish an oral history that Seraphim was sought for his Commune political affiliations after "The Bloody Winter" in Paris in the insurrections of 1870-71. The Commune had proposed economic and political freedom from the monarchy. The members of the Commune were hunted down – 30,000 were reportedly tortured and killed, about 38,000 placed in concentration camps and 7,000 exiled to other French territories. After hiding, Matrot escaped France in 1873 and sought refuge with his wife and

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### Matrot Castle

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three children as far from the coast as possible ending up in Mission Township outside Topeka in Shawnee County, Kansas.

He built his castle in 1883, not on a hill or close to habitation. In keeping with the paranoia that drove him to Kansas, he built the castle as a refuge and fortress in a wooded valley. At the time, Shawnee County had only 29,000 residents (up from 13,000 ten years earlier). The site was a long way from city life. Matrot designed and built the castle himself between 1883 and early 1886. The walls were a foot thick and had gun slits in the turrets that faced all directions. The massive front door with a large French fleur-de-lis molding had a false keyhole with the real one hidden under a brass plate. The huge cellar ostensibly for wine storage could double as a safe haven in time of siege. The cellar connected to an underground tunnel that ran south a considerable distance westward to a ravine (this collapsed and was filled in during the 1940s). He used Native American labor to haul sand and water from the Kansas River for mortar and also used them as bricklayers during the castle construction. Oral tradition says that he paid for their services with his home-made wines.

His choice of the wine business in Kansas was a tough economic one as Kansas had voted for prohibition in 1881 before his arrival. At first it was loosely enforced, but about the time he finished planting the vineyard and completed the castle, Kansas put sanctions in its law. Local brewers closed and wine could be sold only with a physician's prescription. Being outside the city may have had its advantages in wine commerce and from the probate record in 1898, he had a close relationship with the physician who was to head the Topeka Insane Asylum – close enough that he had ran a bill with him from early in 1893 that was not paid until his widow sold the property in 1901. Seraphin somehow made ends meet and the Kansas wine industry is still fighting the Kansas legislature over 100 years later.

#### Architectural Significance

Seraphin was a trained architect, builder, and wine merchant (from statements of his daughter). His skills are evident in the construction of the unique castle. He drew from the changes of style that the French renaissance had brought to France by combining the cylindrical tower with a residence and going for symmetry as opposed to the older irregular facades and square towers. He built a stronger structure (and in his case more easily defended if the oral history of his persecution in France is correct). The use of the spiral staircase saved material and usable space within the castle. The classically-styled arches over the windows and the brick vaulted roof of the cellar also characterize the move in renaissance architecture toward simpler mathematical proportions and geometric design.

The Woodmont home built in 1892 for one million dollars in Gladwyne, PA is cited as an example of Chateausque architecture (recently granted National Register status). Matrot's end result was a crisp, well defined castle home that was not as opulent as most of the Chateausque castle-homes of the period, but functional for the needs of his family..

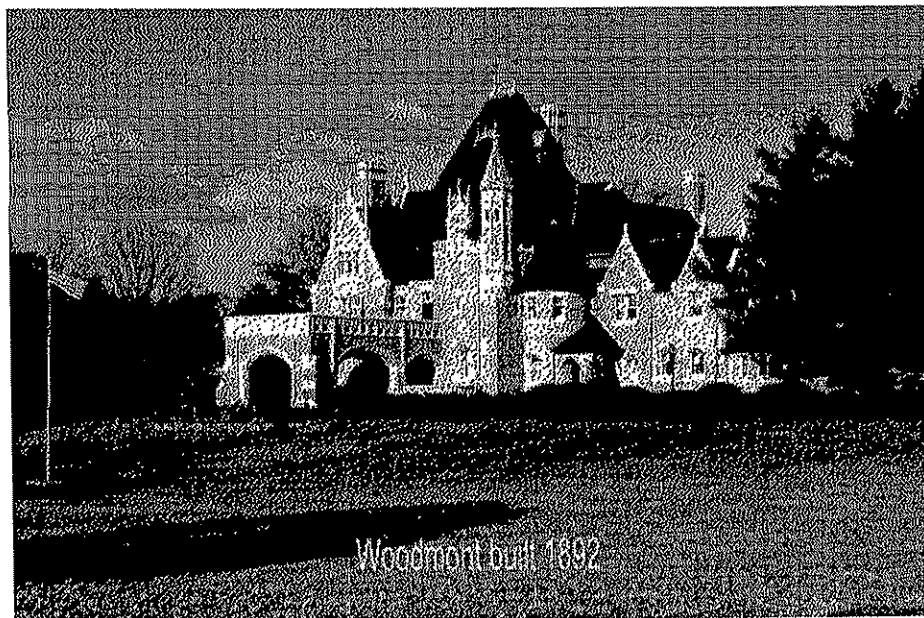
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#### Castle History

Matrot and his wife Antoinette, his two children by a prior marriage, George and Blanche, and their son Simone left France in 1873. They spent time on the east coast and bought the property from Nils P. Anderson in 1883. He held to his promise to his wife and built the castle after one they had occupied in France. The castle was completed in 1886. George returned to France after the castle was completed and was killed in World War I. The family planted the vineyard and prospered. The construction was no small matter in 1883 and the castle shows the touches of a professional architect and builder. Oral history says it was constructed with the help of a few neighbors and the Native Americans that Seraphin trained as bricklayers. Seraphin had applied for citizenship in 1883 but no record of his being naturalized was found. He died unexpectedly at age 68, on May 7, 1898 on the second floor of the castle. A window was removed and his body lowered from the castle – he was not religious and there is no record of an obituary. He was buried in the Foster cemetery on Burlingame Road just north of Topeka with his daughter Blanche and her two children. Antoinette probated his will the same year and eventually sold the castle and vineyard in February 1901 to E.E. Moore who had helped Seraphim in the construction of the castle. Oral history says she lived in the castle for several more years before returning to France where she died in 1914.

E.E. Moore was a bachelor and lived in the castle until May, 1934 when he sold the castle and vineyard to Elroy Vitt. He told a reporter that when he took possession of the property, there were still wine casks and bottles in the cellar, and an old Edison wax record player was in the third floor attic. He sold the property in March 1946 to George Burns and his cousin Earl Green returning veterans of World War II but they in turn sold it to Julius H. Perkuhn in 1947. Perkuhn and his family spent years renovating the



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castle. There was no central heat, plumbing, kitchen facilities or bathrooms when they took possession so they built an addition using brick of the same type and appearance of the original castle construction. They dug a basement before adding the addition and connected it to the escape tunnel exit from the wine cellar. The escape tunnel to the nearby ravine collapsed and they filled it in for the safety of the neighborhood. When Julius died, the castle and a half-acre of land was sold to Paul Clark in September 1974. Again this family continued the renovation of the castle. The wine cellar was cleaned out and electrified. The walls wept indoors with changes in outdoor temperatures, this was corrected with the installation of a moisture barrier between the brick and new drywall. They added a pipe organ to the wine cellar and with the entrances to the towers nearby, the acoustics were reported as unique. They also added central air conditioning to the addition. The Clarks reported strange noises and lights in the castle giving rise to legends of Matrot's ghost that persisted with subsequent families to occupy the castle.

The Clarks sold the castle in 1975 to Brad Miller. Miller added a deck with towers at the south and north of the castle but subsequent owners removed them. He sold the castle and the half acre to Mark Stillings in November, 1978 and he in turn sold it to Caroline Kirk in 1989. She mentioned that they were still relying on water from a cistern when they purchased the castle and had to haul water. Water lines were run to the castle before the International Centers Worldwide purchased it in 2004.

Extensive renovations have been made since November, 2004 – the mortar has been repointed in the towers and wine cellar, grape arbors have been planted, brick work in front of the door and the cellar entrance has been redone. The interior of the castle has redone in keeping with the times of the castle construction. Future plans tentatively include restoration of the vineyard on property to the east of the castle or elsewhere with eventual crushing, bottling and storage in the wine cellar. An open house followed by a Halloween party for the community was held in October, 2005.

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## Continuation Sheet

### Matrot Castle

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#### Bibliography and References

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Partial typed narrative of audiotape. List of the slides.
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## Continuation Sheet

### Matrot Castle

Shawnee County, Kansas

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#### Verbal Boundary Description

Legal description: Matrot Castle Subdivision, Section 32, Township 11, Range 15, Block A, Lot 1.

#### Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the parcel associated with the Matrot Castle.

#### Photographic Information

Property: Matrot Castle

Location: 6424 SW Huntoon, Topeka, KS

Photographer: Patrick Zollner

Date: October 2006

Photo 1: Front (east) elevation, facing SW

Photo 2: Front (east) elevation, facing NW

Photo 3: Rear (west) elevation, facing NE

Photo 4: Rear (west) elevation, facing SE

Photo 5: Interior cellar

Photo 6: Interior cellar, brick detail

Photo 7: Interior, corner turret

Photo 8: Interior, looking into kitchen

Photo 9: Interior, corner turret

Photo 10: Interior, stairway detail

Photo 11: Interior, office

Photo 12: Interior, corner fireplace opening

Photo 13: Interior, main stairway leading to second floor

Photo 14: Interior, second floor window